



E.G. White Symposium Held at Andrews

Center for Adventist Research hosts annual event

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Merlin Burt, director of the Center for Adventist Research, presents to the symposium attendees in the Seminary Chapel last week. (Photo by Guillermo Peralta)

By: Samantha Angeles

On Monday, April 3, the 13th Ellen White Issues Symposium was held in the [Seminary](#) Chapel on the campus of Andrews University.

More than 100 students, faculty, clergy and community members gathered to hear presentations from speakers including Richard Davidson, professor of Old Testament interpretation, and Jiří Moskala, Seminary dean. Other presenters included Merlin Burt, director of the [Center for Adventist Research](#), Denis Kaiser, assistant professor of church history, and Iriann Marie Hausted, PhD candidate. Following the paper presentations, respondents who had read the presenter's papers prior to the event, shared their insights and responses to the papers presented. Respondents this year were Roy Gane, professor of Hebrew Bible and Ancient Near Eastern languages; Jerry Moon, professor of church history; and Keith Mattingly, dean of the College of Arts and Sciences.

Burt, who is the event's primary organizer, began the symposium to address the reality that much of the church's study of White is simply a response to critics' arguments.

"They've had the same arguments for over 100 years," he said. "We need to press further, and explore what can be learned about Ellen White and the gift of prophecy from a faith perspective."

As a result, the Ellen White Issues symposium was born in 2004. Since then, Adventist institutions all over the world, including Russia, Kenya, Mexico and Korea have hosted similar symposia using the scholarly material published from the annual gathering at Andrews.

"I want to colorize Ellen White," said Burt. "We have an emotionally and relationally black-and-white Ellen White, and the only way we can get beyond that is to begin to connect to her in her writings, life and stories."

The topic of study for the 2017 gathering was "Ellen White's Understanding of Hermeneutics."

"Hermeneutics is the science of interpretation," said Burt. "It is looking for what rules keep us objective when we interpret a text."

Many attendees were drawn to the symposium because of the topic.

"I'm studying the development of Adventist theology, so I came to get a better understanding of Ellen G. White and how she interpreted the Bible," said Jimmy Atkins, an MDiv student. "This would be helpful even for those who are not studying theology, so they can get an idea of what pastors are talking about in their sermons."

This year, scholarly papers on the topic of hermeneutics were presented with a prepared response, allowing the presenter to refine his or her ideas before publication. Attendees were encouraged to submit questions to be discussed at a panel following the presentations.

John Reeve, professor of church history and the panel moderator, challenged attendees to ask themselves, "Am I willing to go with objective hermeneutics, or are my personal, private conclusions and decisions going to trump hermeneutics?"

First-time attendee Janet Lankheet, who finished her degree at the Seminary in 1988, was inspired by the presentations.

"Today got me really interested in the research," she said. "I've had a paper brewing in my head that I've never written, and this inspired me to get busy!"

Lankheet and her husband were invited to the symposium by Jim Shields, an Adventist church member from Howell, Michigan, who has attended the event four times.

"I invite a lot of people to come," he said. "I think this is important. I feel these issues need to come from here in the academic arena and be disseminated to the whole church."

Shields particularly appreciated Davidson's presentation exploring the exact beginning and end dates of the 2300-day prophecy in Daniel 8.

"I'm looking forward to seeing the summary when it's printed out," he said. "I have all the summaries from the conferences I've attended because I can sit down and go through them at my own speed."

Davidson's presentation, along with the others, will be published in the "Symposium Journal," which is [available for purchase](#) through the Center for Adventist Research. Those interested in ordering the journal can call 269-471-3209 or email car@andrews.edu. The "Symposium Journal" will also be available at the next Ellen White Issues Symposium on April 2, 2018.

Related Links

- [Who was Ellen White?](#)
- [E.G. White Symposium 2016](#)
- [Symposium Program Archive](#)
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